

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

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R 231436Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 307

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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SUBJECT: CABINET ASKS U.S. TO EXAMINE POSSIBILITY OF END OF
BELLIGERENCY AGREEMENTS WITH ARAB STATES

BEGIN SUMMARY: ISRAELI CABINET FEBRUARY 22 UNANIMOUSLY
APPROVED RABIN'S PROPOSAL THAT U.S. AND ISRAEL SHOULD
EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA, EGYPT AND
JORDAN ON BASIS OF TERMINATION OF STATE OF WAR. CABINET
AVOIDED DISCUSSION OF WHAT WOULD CONSTITUTE ISRAELI
TERRITORIAL QUID PRO QUO WERE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ANY STATE TO
DEVELOP. MINISTERS AND COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT NEW ELEMENT
IN LATEST CABINET DECISION IS ITS DEPARTURE FROM EARLIER
ISRAELI STAND (IN U.S./ISRAELI MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING)
THAT GOAL OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN OUGHT TO BE OVERALL
SETTLEMENT. ALTHOUGH UNANIMITY PREVAILED IN FORMAL VOTE,
CABINET HARDLINERS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS
IF NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN ENSUE. END SUMMARY.

1. ISRAELI CABINET FEBRUARY 22, IN COURSE OF LENGTHY
DISCUSSION OF A NUMBER OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY
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ISSUES, CONSIDERED ITS POSITION REGARDING NEXT STEP IN

NEGOTIATIONS AND SUMMED IT UP IN AN UNREVEALING SINGLE SENTENCE: BEGIN TEXT: ON THE SUBJECT OF REVIEWING THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ARAB COUNTRIES ON TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR--THE PRIME MINISTER ADVISED THE CABINET AS TO WHAT HE PROPOSED TO CLARIFY IN THIS REGARD, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY THE UNITED STATES AND WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CABINET'S EXTANT RESOLUTIONS. END TEXT

2. ALL ISRAELI MEDIA REPORT CABINET ACTION AND DESCRIBE MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION (SEE TEL AVIV 1310) PRECEDING APPROVAL OF ABOVE POSITION. BEST ACCOUNT OF WHAT IS SAID TO HAVE ACTUALLY TRANSPIRED, AND THE BACKGROUND TO CABINET DELIBERATIONS IS PROVIDED BY MAARIV POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT JOSEPH HARIF, AND ANALYSIS BELOW IS LARGELY BASED ON HIS REPORT.

3. ACCORDING TO HARIF, RABIN TOLD THE MINISTERS THAT WHILE IN WASHINGTON HE HAD BEEN ASKED FOR HIS VIEW REGARDING THE POSSIBILITIES OF AGREEMENTS WITH EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN ON THE BASIS OF SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS IN RETURN FOR "ENDING THE STATE OF WAR." RABIN REPLIED IN WASHINGTON THAT WITH REGARD TO EGYPT AND SYRIA THE U.S. IS EMPOWERED (BY ISRAEL) TO EXAMINE SUCH POSSIBILITY, BUT WITH REGARD TO JORDAN--RABIN HAD SAID--HE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO EMPOWER THE U.S. IN THIS MATTER AND MOREOVER HE WOULD ALSO NOT RECOMMEND IT TO THE CABINET. AT THE CABINET MEETING, HOWEVER--ACCORDING TO HARIF--RABIN LIMITED HIMSELF TO SAYING THAT THE U.S. WAS AWAITING ISRAEL'S REPLY REGARDING NEXT STEPS AND THE CABINET WAS REQUESTED TO EXPRESS ITS OPINION IN THE MATTER. RABIN THEN PROPOSED THAT ISRAEL'S REPLY SHOULD BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING FOUR PRINCIPLES:

A) RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WITH ITS ORIGINAL PARTICIPANTS; B) GIVEN GOI'S READINESS TO CONDUCT PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS READY ALSO TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE NEIGHBORING STATES ON THE BASIS OF TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR; IT IS ESSENTIAL, HOWEVER, THAT U.S. AND ISRAEL SHOULD AGREE ON THE MEANING OF SUCH A CONCEPTION BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF NEGOTIATIONS; C) ANY OPERATIVE DECISION VIS-A-VIS ANY STATE CONCERNING TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR AGREEMENTS WILL BE TAKEN SEPARATELY AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME; D) IF SUCH A POSSIBILITY FOR NEGOTIA-

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TIONS MATERIALIZES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL DECIDE ON THE DETAILED CONDITIONS.

4. ACCORDING TO POLITICAL COMMENTATORS, THE KEY INNOVATION IN LATEST CABINET FORMULATION (AS SEVERAL MINISTERS AND THE COMMENTATORS THEMSELVES INTERPRETED IT) WAS THE INCLUSION OF JORDAN IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS SYRIA AND EGYPT FOR THE EXPLORATION OF AGREEMENTS BASED ON TERMINATION OF

THE STATE OF WAR. ON THE BASIS OF THE U.S./ISRAELI MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ACCOMPANYING SINAI II (AS PUBLISHED), THE GOI HERETOFORE HAD BEEN WILLING TO COUNTENANCE NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN LEADING ONLY TO AN OVERALL PEACE SETTLEMENT.

CABINET HARDLINERS--LABOR MINISTERS YAACOBI, HILLEL, AND NRP MINISTERS RAPHAEL AND MHAMMER--REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER APPARENT CHANGE IN GOI POSITION REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN. RAPHAEL, FOR INSTANCE, SAID THAT GOI SHOULD NOT ABANDON THE PRINCIPLE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD STRIVE ONLY FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN. HAMMER SAID THAT RABIN'S CURRENT PROPOSAL CONSTITUTES A "DISTINCT CHANGE," WHILE HILLEL EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THIS RESOLUTION WILL LEAD TO AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH JORDAN.

6. CABINET MODERATES--ALLON, ZADOK, OFER AND SHEMTOV--ON THE OTHER HAND BACKED RABIN'S VIEW THAT U.S. SHOULD EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN ON THE ABOVE BASIS. KOL WENT EVEN FURTHER, AND REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT THESE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PALESTINIANS AS WELL AS JORDAN.

7. GIVEN RENEWED INTEREST IN "END OF BELLIGERENCY" FORMULA, RABIN IN FEBRUARY 20 RADIO INTERVIEW WAS ASKED TO COMMENT ON CHARGE THAT IN NEGOTIATING SINAI II ISRAEL HAD BEEN COMPELLED TO BACK DOWN FROM ITS INITIAL STAND THAT IT WOULD WITHDRAW FROM PASSES AND OIL FIELDS ONLY IN RETURN FOR TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR, AND THAT THIS PRECEDENT PUTS IN DOUBT GOI CREDIBILITY IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS. RABIN REPLIED THAT: A) IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS THERE IS CERTAIN DEGREE OF COMPROMISE; B) IN ABSENCE OF UNCLASSIFIED

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PEACE, ISRAEL IN 1976 SHOULD STRIVE FOR TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR; AND C) AS REGARDS SINAI II "WE GAVE BACK THE OIL, BUT WE ARE IN AN ABSOLUTE STRATEGIC CONTROL OF THE PASSES." MOREOVER, RABIN ADDED, "THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT I STATED AND WHAT HAS ACTUALLY TAKEN PLACE IS LIMITED, AND THERE WERE MUCH MORE SERIOUS PRECEDENTS IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL."
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